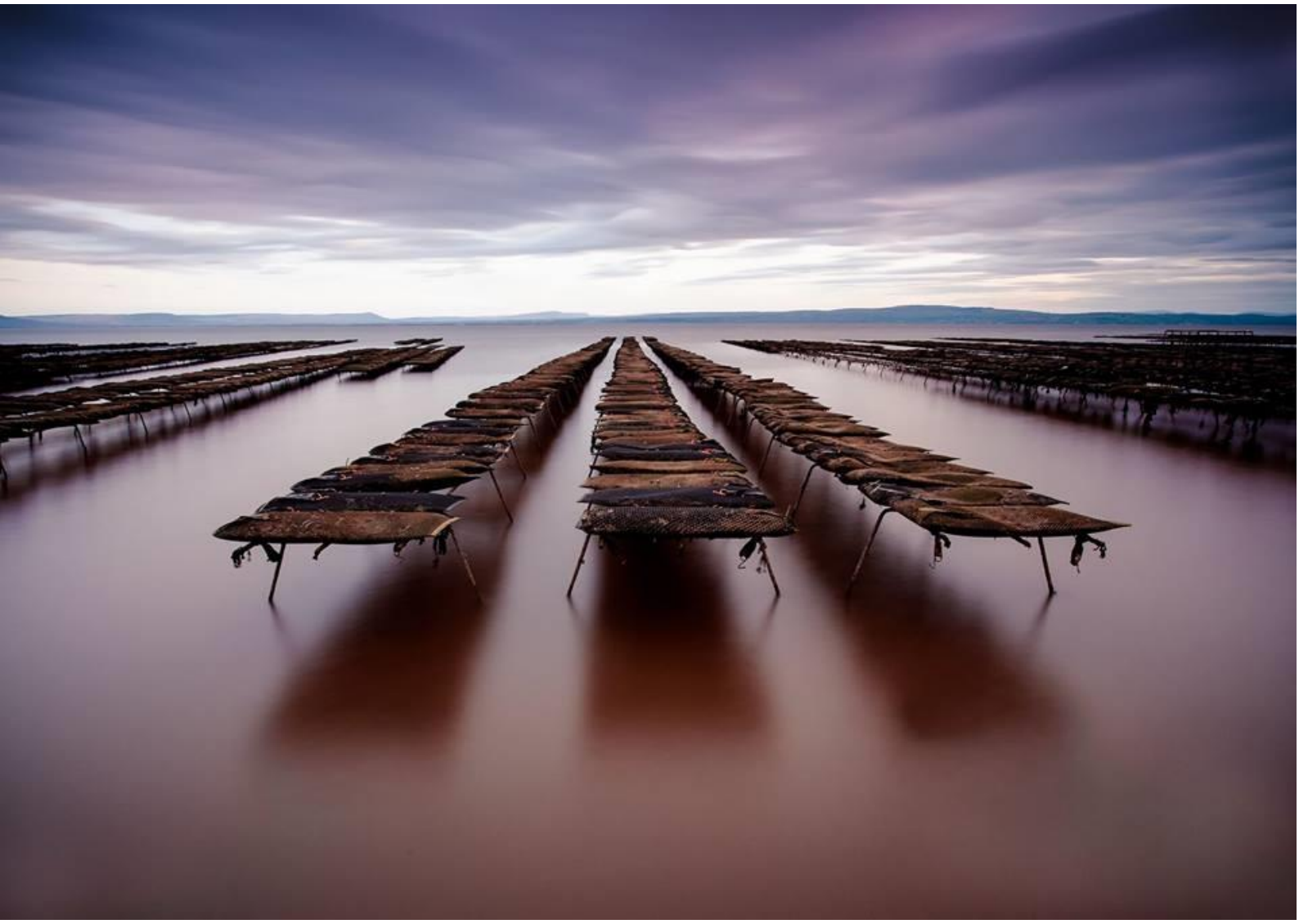
Aquaculture Advisory Council



Analysis of the European survey of norovirus in oysters

Recommendation, November 2019

The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) gratefully acknowledges EU funding support.

AAC recommendation on the matter of the analysis of the European survey of norovirus in oysters	
Legal basis **Procedure**	Art. 44 of regulation (UE) 1380/2013 2.a (initiative to EC)
References / documents **CELEX main document** **Other ID**	EFSA (European Food Safety Authority), 2019. Scientific report on analysis of the European baseline survey of norovirus in oysters. EFSA Journal 2019;17(7):5762.
Working Group responsible **Rapporteur** **Internal legal basis** **Internal ID**	Shellfish Working Group Jean-Christophe Raymond Art. 3 of AAC statutes
WG Meetings / Written consultation dates - Approval on the 07/11/2019	
EXCOM - Approval on the 18/11/2019	
Notifications EC – DG MARE EC – DG SANTE EC – DG ENV Member States	 [19/11/2019] [19/11/2019] [19/11/2019]
Follow up and comment received	

The AAC members are aware that noroviruses represent a serious and widespread global public health threat and that they are the main causal agent of viral human gastroenteritis.

The AAC agree that the viral risk assessment should be based on a sound scientific basis and is relevant when:

- it is based on the detection of infectious particles and not on the detection of RNA genomes (the genetic material of norovirus), using the current ISO 15216 standard and

- it demonstrates the link between the prevalence and amount of viral infectious particles in the foodstuff and the prevalence of gastroenteritis among consumers.

The AAC members think that the molecular approach (RT-qPCR) described in the ISO standard to detect the RNA genomes of noroviruses currently requires standardisation, to be more detailed and better interpreted (infectious *vs.* non-infectious, human *vs*. porcine GII variants, false negative *vs.* false positive results, addition of validation methods, e.g. possibly sequencing PCR products etc.) for it to be more reliable.

A harmonised level of detection (LOD) and level of quantification (LOQ) should be set across laboratories, with a well-established (direct or indirect) correlation between the amount of RNA genomes and that of infectious particles, the latter being the only ones constituting a danger for human beings.

Considering the fact that conditioning the oysters was unexpectedly found to be associated with a lower prevalence of the norovirus genome, the effects of the relaying, purification, conditioning and stocking processes on the survival of infectious particles in the shellfish but also in the water and the environment, as well as potential transfer pathways, should be investigated using norovirus or suitable surrogates.

The issue of the (direct or indirect) detection of infectious noroviruses rather than the corresponding RNA genomes has been flagged by the producers for a couple of years. The AAC members believe that this is a crucial research topic which should be supported and funded (through projects such as the French program Oxyvir, currently supported by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund).

The organisation of workshops gathering all the European stakeholders involved in the issue of norovirus in shellfish (industry, academy, research, government and policymakers) to discuss possible solutions should be promoted.

Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC)
Rue de l'Industrie 11, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 (0) 2 720 00 73
E-mail: secretariat@aac-europe.org
Twitter: @aac_europe
www.aac-europe.org